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ABSTRACT

This paper explores Fred Genesee's Classroom Based Assessment (CBA) as an alternative model for assessing instruction as it affects students' learning in an immersion program. CBA collects information on language while instruction and other activities are taking place, allowing teachers the flexibility to alter teaching strategies to be more responsive to students' learning. Conventional assessment primarily measures learning via written tests. Its perspective defines learning as a product achieved by the individual student yet ignores the process involved in teaching and learning. The study examines the role of the teacher in the assessment process and proposes that CBA considers not only instruction as it affects learning but the quality of teaching as well. Five critical taching skills (knowledge, pedagogy, observational, interpersonal, instructional) during an instructional activity are discussed as they impact on student achievement. The placement of teachers at the center of what is called the Teacher Classroom-Based Assessment (TCBA) process is recommended that predicts, explains, and modifies the links between teaching and learning and helps to draw conclusions and make recommendations for instruction, inclusive of teaching. (Contains 25 references.) (Author/NAV)

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How Teachers in Managing Instruction Facilitate the Teaching-Learning Process: An Assessment Perspective

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Abstract

How Teachers in Managing Instruction Facilitate the Teaching-Learning Process: An Assessment Perspective

Conventional assessment primarily measures learning via written tests. Its perspective defines learning as a *product* achieved by the individual student ignoring the *process* involved in teaching and learning. This paper explores Genesee's Classroom Based Assessment (CBA) as an alternative model for assessing instruction as it affects students' learning in an immersion program. It examines the role of the teacher in the assessment process and proposes that CBA considers not only instruction as it affects learning but the quality of teaching as well. Five critical teaching skills during an instructional activity are discussed as they impact on student achievement. It recommends the placement of teachers at the center of what is called, the Teacher Classroom-Based Assessment process.

"How Teachers in Managing Instruction Facilitate the Teaching-Learning Process: An Assessment Perspective"

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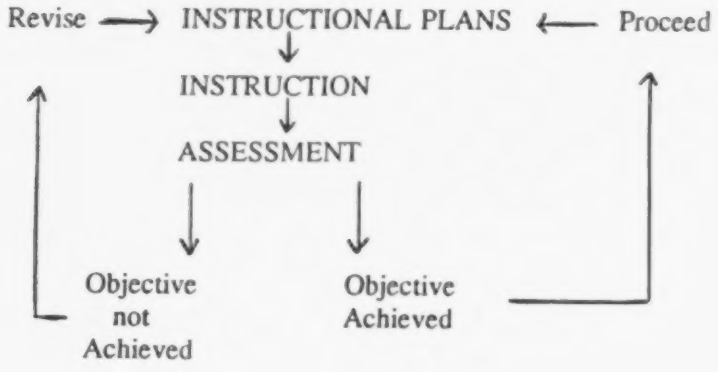
Most of the academic decisions about learning in school are based on what Fred Genesee, of McGill University, calls conventional assessment. Conventional assessment primarily measures learning via written tests. Its perspective defines learning as a product achieved by the individual student ignoring the process involved in teaching and learning. Judgment is made about the learner, seldom about the curriculum, and rarely about the teaching even though the testing mania in American education has and does purport to measure accountability across all three factors (Madaus & Tan, 1993). Fred Genesee at the 1992 **Advocates for Language Learning Conference** proposed an alternative to conventional assessment. He proposed that a repertoire of methods such as observations, conferences, and interactive journals, in addition to tests, be utilized by schools to collect information about teaching and learning in immersion classrooms. By engaging in this process of data gathering Genesee contends better decisions can be made about students as well as the instruction that affects students' achievement. He called his assessment Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA). We believe Genesee's model is pedagogically sound and can be applied in all teaching-learning transactions since he views assessment as the catalyst for effective teaching.

Traditional and Alternative Assessment Perspectives

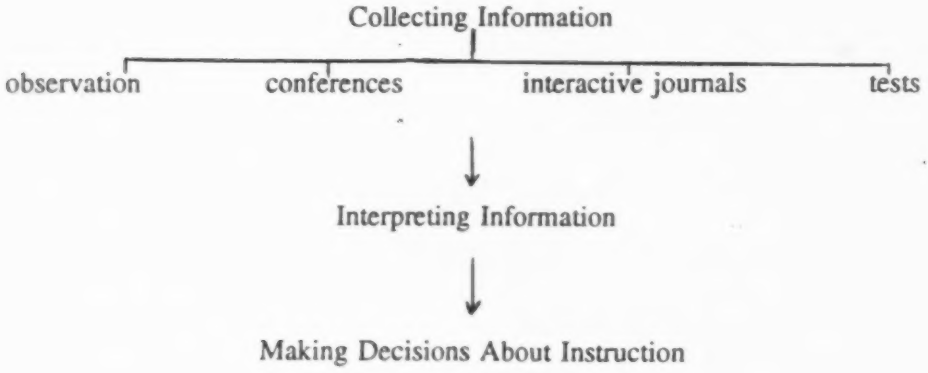
Generally, "...in schools students are expected to learn from a set of materials and a teacher... (Bloom, p. 21, 1976). The curriculum is prescribed for students and teachers are held responsible for its organization. However, in conventional assessment the relevancy of this prescribed curriculum is rarely assessed nor is the effectiveness of the teaching in delivering this curriculum. Furthermore, using conventional assessment practices the appropriateness of the teacher's choice of learning materials and activities for instruction is not measured (see Figure 1). We believe along with Genesee that an alternative to the traditional method of assessment is necessary if we are to make more appropriate decisions about instruction and its effect upon students. For how to assess instruction as it affects students' learning we recommend Genesee's CBA model (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: Conventional Assessment



In contrast to the traditional assessment model, at the crux of Genesee's Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) model is the students' ability to communicate appropriately and effectively in a variety of academic and non-academic situations. CBA collects information on language while instruction and other activities are taking place. Morever, teachers must collect information regarding students' learning strategies, attitudes about classroom activities and their views of teaching and learning. **This is an ongoing process that allows teachers to alter their strategies to provide interventions that are more responsive to students' learning** (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Genesee's Classroom Based Assessment Model (CBA)



Clearly, Genesee's proposition is a move in the right direction. One that teachers in the field of second language teaching and special education have been advocating and working towards for years: a repertoire of alternative assessment methods that help us make decisions about instruction

(Alvarez,1988; Dehyle, 1987; Edelsky & Harman, 1992; Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1982;). The goals of CBA are to use the information collected to motivate learning, not just to evaluate it.

Issues Related to the CBA Model

While we support the basic tenets of Genesee's CBA, there are two issues of concern we would like to address. One of these deals with requiring teachers to distinguish between content learning and language learning. It's problematic to make this type of dichotomy in learning when the basis for doing so is not precise and generally inferred. We believe this gives rise again to the debate concerning the Piagetian and Vygotskian views of language and thought relationship regarding cognitive development. Language learning entails receptive and expressive language skills development and we can only speculate that in content learning versus language learning a distinction between receptive and expressive language skills may provide a medium for assessing content and language learning. We question the importance Genesee places on the need to separate content from language <u>in</u> learning since the basis for doing so remains a pedagogical enigma (Corson, 1986; Edelsky, 1992;).

The second issue deals with the absence in the CBA model of the role of the teacher in the assessment process. We contend that CBA needs to consider not only instruction as it affects learning but the quality of teaching. Therefore, we have modified Genesee's CBA model to include the teacher. We propose the Teacher Classroom-Based Model (TBCA) where the teacher is

continuously engaged in assessing his/her performance as well as the students'in the learning process. There are critical elements during an instructional activity where the exchange between teacher and student impacts on student achievement. This achievement is facilitated by factors related to teacher performance such as: 1.the **appropriateness** of an instructional activity and chosen materials; 2. the **efficiency** of communication between students and teacher; and, 3. the **effectiveness** of the teacher's knowledge and depth of perception concerning the students' interest and processing of information (O'Neill, 1988). In fact, student achievement is the demonstrated outcome of the effects of particular links between teaching-learning strategies. Consequently, we present the following discussion delineating what educators might consider in self-assessing their performance as it affects student learning.

Critical Teaching Skills in Managing Instruction

Bloom (1976), Rubin (1985), Shulman (1987) Wood (1992), and, more recently, a report of the Consortium of the Council of Chief State Officers (1993), have shed light on some important variables that teachers bring to the instruction-achievement exchange in classrooms which has bearing on conventional assessment results. Bloom (1976) concludes that we should focus on the ways in which the teacher manages the learning since this management has simultaneous effects on learner achievement (p. 111). Rubin (1985) considers teachers' perceptions as pivotal in making accurate instructional decisions (p.47, Rubin). Martin (1993), Shulman (1987) and Wood (1992)

maintain that enabling teachers to reflect upon their teaching in concert with others is critical to improving teaching and consequently, student learning. In fact, the development of "practical pedagogical wisdom" as differentiated from theoretical knowledge of practice necessitates peer interaction among teachers (Shulman, 1987). Additionally, the Consortium of the Council of Chief State Officers (1993) emphasizes the importance of a teachers' knowledge, dispositions, and performance skills in promoting learning. We believe that a melding of their perspectives gives us a clearer understanding of the variables with which a teacher can self-assess their role in contributing to the learning process. We have synthesized from the above mentioned sources particular critical skills for teachers to possess in order to really manage learning. The order of presentation of these skills does in no way imply that they are hierarchical; in fact, they are best viewed from a horizontal, interrelated perspective.

The critical skills are:

1. Knowledge is an individually applied conceptual framework which guides teachers in their practice. It provides an organizational structure in the management of the teaching-learning process (Blanton, 1992; Bloom, 1976;). Knowledge leads to the development of metacognitive abilities which enable teachers to ground their actions for decision-making (Blanton, 1992; Freire, 1976; Giroux, 1988). Factors that teachers need to be aware of in reflecting upon their richness of knowledge are:

- depth of general knowledge;
- depth of knowledge in specific content area or discipline;
- ability to prescribe actions and interpret practice;
- aptness for learning about the school culture and how it impacts on their practice;
- "passion" or enthusiasm for learning as demonstrated by her / his professional development activities (attendance at workshops, seminars, conferences, personal readings, presentations, publications, etc.)

2. Pedagogy refers to the teachers's ongoing development in the understanding and application of principles gleaned regarding the science of teaching. It's shaped by the knowledge of curricula, textbooks, school organization, and the structure of the teaching profession. Moreover, an "audience of peers" is crucial for constructing an integrated perspective on pedagogical practice. In applying this "science of teaching" teachers need to:

- understand and incorporate knowledge of child development in practice;
- be aware of cultural influences on learning;
- understand and allow for the fact that children have various ways of learning or learning styles;
- encourage critical thinking, problem-solving, and performance skills in instructional activities;

- value the practice of reflecting upon her/his own teaching with colleagues in contributing to the development of good practice.

3. Observational skills are based on perceptions. Perceptions are views which are conditioned by beliefs, values, attitudes and experiences (Rubin, 1985). It "colors" teachers' expectations of student abilities resulting in a selective "reading" of students' classroom performance. Consequently, perception leads to making assumptions affected by circumstances and is an interpretation of what we assume to be true (Perez, 1992). Acknowledging the biasing effects of perception on our observational skills helps us in acquiring increased awareness and sensitivity. Practiced observational skills allow us to:

- assess our ability to note the details of the ways in which students learn;
- assess our ability to observe students' responses to the cues;
- assess our ability to give additional cues:
- assess our ability to shift the form of the cues until students apparently grasp what they need to do;

4. Interpersonal skills are based on communication abilities. Communication is a transactional process of receiving and sending messages. In the act of communicating continuous feedback is given via verbal and nonverbal behaviors which strengthens or dilutes the message (Friend & Cook, 1992). Since effective communication is marked by reciprocity between those involved in sending and receiving messages, the teacher is mindful of:

- creating an environment that encourages positive social interactions;

- providing an environment that encourages self-learning;
- explaining and/or illustrating the task in more than one way;
- explaining and/or providing a variety of cues as to what the student is to learn;
- being encouraging - many times;
- providing varied types of encouragement or reinforcement creating situations in which the learner becomes his own source of information;
- fostering relations with colleagues, parents, and community agencies to support student learning and well-being.

5. Instructional skills of a teacher refers to her/his "strategic abilities" or command of methods. They are elaborated methodological approaches which positively affect student motivation, involvement, and concentration in learning. These "strategic abilities" incorporate a variety of techniques to manage learning (Bloom, 1976; Rubin, 1985;). These are a set of highly personal procedures which work in pursuing learning objectives and cultivating willing learners (Rubin, 1987). Instructional skills are geared to provide the following:

- a productive learning environment that supports cognitive and affective development;
- appropriate sequencing of learning tasks;
- schedule opportunities for practice on tasks;
- opportunities for active learning;
- opportunities to include student interests in learning
- opportunites for self-learning;

- opportunities to enhance students' communicative skills;
- opportunites for ongoing data gathering on student progress;
- opportunities for collecting systematic and uniform achievement feedback on learners.

The Teacher-Classroom Based Assessment Model (TCBA)

Effectiveness in teaching subsumes that knowledge, pedagogy, interpersonal and instructional skills complement each other. They are mutually dependent skills that afford the teacher the means for managing learning. At the heart of the teacher's "management of learning" in the classroom is the interpersonal communication between student and teacher. The essence of that communication depends on the extent of the teacher's knowledge and perception for maintaining student interest in processing information. This interactive process is impacted by the teacher's choice of activity and materials for engaging students. The teacher's experiences in the classroom are significant factors which need to be included in assessment procedures. We believe teacher's insight and experiences are the missing factors in the CBA model proposed by Genesee (1992). These insights and experiences must be documented and reflected upon in order to engage in self-assesment in managing the teaching-learning process (Martin, 1993). Therefore, we submit the Teacher Classroom-Based Assessment Model (TCBA, see Table 1). TCBA would be able to predict, explain and modify the links between teaching and learning and help draw conlusions and make recommendations for instruction, inclusive of teaching.

Table 1.

Teacher Classroom-Based Assessment (TCBA)

Collecting Information on Experiences and Insights via Teacher's Critical Skills	Documentation for Interpreting Information	Making Decisions re: Teaching-learning Process. Reflecting on Practices.
During	Teaching	Post Teaching
1. Observational skills: (perceptions)	pencil and pad, mental notation, video, flashes of insight, teacher journals	Self-assessment of teaching performance: a. videos; b. personal journals; c. student feedback via: interactive journals, portfolios, conferences, evaluation of teaching effectiveness; d. dialogue with peers: interactive efforts with colleagues; e. dialogue with parents: feedback, conferences, partnerships
2. Interpersonal skills: (communication)	audiotape, video, interactive journals with students, individual student conferences	
3. Instructional skills: (strategic abilities)	video, planbook, lesson plans, interactions with peers, student conferences, portfolios of students and teacher, teacher narratives, learning logs	
4. Knowledge: (metacognitive skills)	planbook, lesson plans, dialogues with peers,	
5. Pedagogy: "Wisdom of practice" (Shulman, 1987);	planbook, lesson plans, materials and activities for instruction	

Summary

We believe along with Genesee that alternatives to traditional methods of assessment are necessary in order to make more appropriate decisions concerning students and instruction. Alternative methods of assessment need to be an ongoing process. A key component in this process involves teacher self-reflection which allows them to more readily alter their strategies in response to student learning needs. Student achievement is enhanced by the quality of teaching and exchanges between students and their teachers in the learning process.

Consequently, when we place teachers at the center of the assessment process which we call the Teacher Classroom-Based Assessment Model (TCBA), they become **facilitators of learning**. As teachers take center stage in the TCBA process, they must self-reflect on the following critical skills: observation, communication, instruction, knowledge, and pedagogy. The utilization of self-reflection on these critical skills provides the means for teachers to manage learning. When we manage learning we promote students' achievement. Wood (1992) has succinctly stated the cornerstone of our perspective on assessment, "By putting teachers' experiences at the center of the evaluation process ...[we] provide a vehicle to help teachers view their work seriously as grounds for conscious theory making, problem-solving, and decision making."

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